Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261
(760) 346-6588

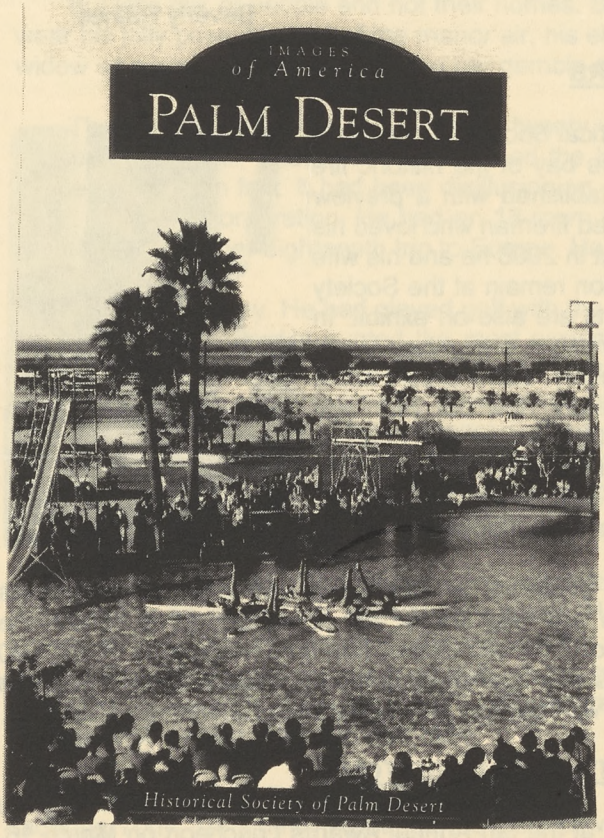
The Hourglass

Community
Service
Collections
Archives

SPRING 2009

VOL. 16, NO. 1

IMAGES OF PALM DESERT
A Book of Historical Photos & Captions



This long-awaited local history publication has finally arrived!!! You will want one issue for your coffee table and at least one other to loan to those who want to borrow it for a more thorough reading. It is filled from cover to cover with beautiful historic photos and just enough text to mark the high points in the history of Palm Desert.

Never again will you drive the streets of this city and see it only as a modern tourist destination. Your mind will picture the early days, the pioneers, the celebrities, the growth, the change; and this will engender in you a new pride and appreciation of your community.

A special thank-you is extended to Hal Rover, who has been working on the compilation of this book for some time. Along with Hal, Brett Romer has been printing historic photos from the Society's archival collections. Finally, the captioning efforts of Kim Housken should be recognized as a critical addition to this historical work. The volunteer hours donated by this trio are deeply appreciated by the Board of Directors and members of the Society.

A book release party was held on Friday, Feb. 20 from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at the Palm Desert Visitor Center. This gave the public an opportunity to join Society members in purchasing a copy of this marvelous publication for only $21.99 + tax. It was a joyous time of visiting and remembering, and light refreshments were served. The Visitor Center will continue to sell the book; it will also be available at the historic firehouse on El Paseo.

Even if you don't consider yourself a history buff, your excitement quotient will be raised considerably once you have had the opportunity to scan the pages of this book. The contents will give you a hint of what is in store for your enjoyment: (1) Early Ranchers, (2) Palm Village and the War Years, (3) It Took a Family, (4) The Shaping of Shadow Mountain Club, (5) Canyons, Coves, and High Places, (6) Building a Community, (7) Famous Folk and Colorful Characters, and (8) Today in Palm Desert.

The most recent identifiable native culture in the Coachella Valley area was the Cahuilla Indian tribe. They were hunter-gatherers who occupied the desert, mountain, and passes region. The cove area here was first called "Sand Hole" by government surveyors in the 1850s. The 1000-foot alluvial fan was not considered a desirable place to build because of seasonal flooding. The first rancher was Charles McDonald, who patented land in the Palm Village area in 1903. After five unsuccessful attempts to grow hops, he sold his 480-acre property to King Gillette (of razor fame) and Thomas Rosenberger in 1929. Sand Hole was first homesteaded in 1910.

During World War II, General George Patton selected the area south of Palm Village as a site for a vehicle maintenance pool as an addition to the 18,000-square mile Desert Training Center at Chiriaco Summit. After the war Clifford Henderson was looking for a good place to establish a post-war community, and Randall Henderson wanted a new location for his Desert Magazine publishing plant. Growth during the 1960s and 1970s was phenomenal. And the story goes on....it's all in the book. Get your copy of the best reading of the 2000s....it's amazing!!

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Hal Rover has taken the chairmanship of this committee. The number of visitors to the museum has increased, so we desperately need more volunteers, especially on Saturdays. When no volunteers are available, Anne Tuttle must take time from her administrative tasks to guide them, and because of our tight budget Anne is currently being paid for only 30 hours per week. Add a new dimension to your life style, please call the office at 346-6588 to sign up.

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The Board and membership extend a special "THANK YOU" to **Jean Ernst** for all the time and effort she expended as chair-person of the volunteers during the past years. She set up good training seminars, interesting field trips, and kept the schedule up to par. We appreciate your hard work, Jean!!

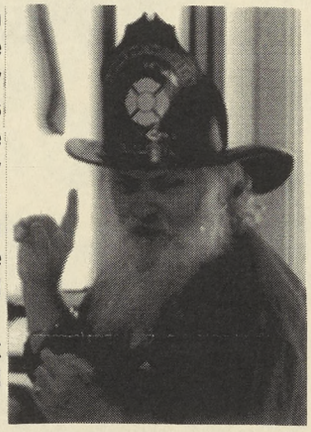
NEW MEMBERS

Contributing: Ken Heichman

Business: Coachella Valley Security, Inc.

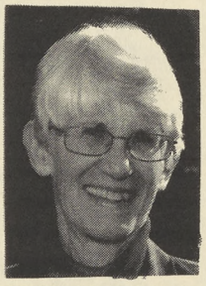
Individual: James L. Sundahl
Beverly Raines

DECEASED MEMBERS



Robert "Bob" Green became an especially significant person to the Historical Society beginning in 2002. That was the year that work began to set up the main exhibit in the bay of the historic fire house on El Paseo. "Fire Fighting: Tools of the Trade" was officially established with a preview opening on Friday afternoon of January 24, 2003. Because Bob was a retired fireman who loved his vocation, he had set up a firefighting home museum in Bermuda Dunes, but in 2006 he and his wife Carolyn moved to Cheney, Washington. Many choice pieces of his collection remain at the Society firehouse, and also his wife's interesting collection of antique chamber pots are also on exhibit. In 1943 a boy was born in Troy, Ohio and as a child he dreamed of becoming a firefighter. At ten years of age his family moved to California, and after a brief stint in the military, Bob's dream came true. For 36 years he worked with the City of Indio and Cal. Dept. of Forestry, now Cal. Fire, and retired as a Battalion Chief in 2000. Bob passed away on January 19, 2009 in Cheney. Friends, family, and work associates celebrated the life of this wonderful man at a memorial service held at Desert Chapel Church in Palm Springs on February 7. We won't forget Bob Green, and we will continue to be grateful for the firefighting exhibit -- without him it would never have happened.

Loretta Riley was a long-time member of the Historical Society. Her presence at luncheons and other social events brightened each occasion with her lively conversation. A native Californian, she was one of that prominent group here in the desert known as real estate salespersons. In fact she held the presidency of the Palm Desert Board of Realtors in 1979-1980 and was voted "Realtor of the Year." Taking on more responsibility, she was also the Regional Vice-President for the California Board of Realtors. Mrs. Riley led an active life in the 88 years she lived. We will miss her smiling face and sparkling personality.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ADELE RUXTON

One of our most active Society members has been chosen for the Community Service Award by the Indian Wells Athena Committee. She will be honored at the 5th Annual Awards Luncheon on March 16, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa. Tickets are $40 each. Adele is a retired teacher who is thorough in all projects she undertakes. She has guided the B.J. Callahan memorial fund program for Washington School's 5th graders. Also she helped to initiate the school tours program sponsored by the Society. We are very grateful for her work on behalf of the Historical Society of Palm Desert. To reserve your seat for the luncheon, please call Anne Tuttle at the Society, 346-6588.

Images of America - PALM DESERT --- Book Order Form

1) I want _____ copies of "Images of America - Palm Desert @ $23.70 per copy (tax included.)*

2) Please mail my copy/copies to: Name: _____
Address: _____
_____

*My check for $_____ is enclosed. My check for $_____ (including $4.00 postage & handling per copy) is enclosed.

A TRAILER HOME

A fictional writing by Esther Schaak, author & former resident of Cahuilla Hills
Edited by Ginny Folkers, HS Curator

A trailer home is a mid-twentieth century euphemism for a cold water flat, for this is the permanent abode of the eager hopeful on the way up and the old on the way down. They are truly down. This is the abode of the pensioner, the couple who are eking out their last days with the minimum of income and a minuscule capital. A trailer? That is absurd. Why I've seen trailers that are beautiful. They hook two of them together and have 15-foot rooms, fully carpeted, running hot and cold water. Ah, yes, that is true. Just as there are pent houses and in the same building, there may be a one-room apartment with one small window on the court.

But let's talk of people and not their homes. Bob Waters sat in his trailer alone. His defenses were down. He didn't need to wear his jolly pose, his lord of the manor air, his elegant condescending face. Hazel was in Phoenix, the guest of the millionaire widow who needed someone to help her gamble on the dog races.

The senator had found him out after twenty years, and he even grumbled nervously that maybe Bob "had no time" to be executor of his will. That threat undermined the last hope in a life that but ten years before had been so full of promise. The descent has been fast. It had been disillusioning, for Bob had been a success, a phenomenal success. He was vice-president of an important corporation. He had an 18-room mansion, two servants, and three cars. His daughter was in finishing school. Hazel had made her eighteenth trip to Europe. He collected first editions.

He wasn't happy. He had played golf with the president and important names that made the front pages of the newspapers and slick magazines. He hunted the most exclusive shooting blinds, and fished in the most restricted rivers. He belonged to lodges whose members flew in via plane in order to be assured of wilderness, but breakfasted on silver served by servants whose perfection was assured by generations of training for service. But Hazel drank. She had traveled back and forth to Europe, but had seen only the bedroom ceilings in The Carlton in London and the George V in Paris. Daughter Peggy was a disappointment. That was the risk one took in adoptions, even though they had secured the girl from the most famous agency in the world. Peggy wanted to quit finishing school. She wrote of "Tony" and refused to go out with the select stable of eligible men provided by the exclusive girls' school.

The president of the company was appointed to the senate by the governor of the state. Bob, as first vice-president expected to be moved up. He was by-passed. He threatened to resign, and his resignation was accepted. They sold the 20-room house. They moved to California. There was a spurt of success selling yardage, so he built a $40,000 home, "to encourage Peggy to have more eligible young men." Peggy was firm. She would marry Tony. Hazel joined the AA. But the $40,000 house went. The cars went. The furniture went. There was the trailer home. It could be pulled by the senator's station wagon. Bob sighed. The end was near.

"Da-da," it was Peg's voice using the term of pre-finishing school days. She had come with her four children and her adoring Tony. Tony deftly managed the children while Peggy fixed lunch for everybody. The children laughed and climbed over the rocks in front of the trailer.

Tony said proudly, "Dad, I won a trip to Camelback Inn in Phoenix. I sold the most washing machines of any salesman in Sears Roebuck."

Bob rubbed his eyes and looked at his foster daughter's husband. He worked hard. He loved his wife and adored his children. He looked at Peggy. She glowed with happiness. Bob smiled. He thought, "Maybe they have the receipt for happiness. The big job isn't the answer." He ate heartily of the canned spaghetti Peg had heated for dinner. Tomorrow he would see about getting an option for the new subdivision so people could park their trailers high up on the hill.

Editor's note: Mrs. Schaak demonstrates her interest in human nature in most of her writings. She gives us a key-hole glimpse of the personalities of many Cahuilla Hills residents during the time she lived there.

MEMBERSHIP

Individual	$25	Contributing	$100	Bronze	$1000
Family	$30	Patron	$250	Silver	$2500
Supporting	$50	Business	$75	Gold	$5000

DESERT SANDS OF TIME

This desert had been known to the early Indians and Mexicans as "Palma de la mano de Dios," the palm or hollow of God's hand. There is proof that the area where Palm Springs stands today was inhabited by man perhaps 10,000 years ago. This establishes the fact that Palm Springs is perhaps the oldest inhabited village on the American Continent. These men of the stone-age may have been living close to the ocean, for it is thought that at that time an arm of the ocean, now known as the Gulf of California, extended almost to the base of the San Jacinto Mountains. Since that time the depression has been alternately filled and then emptied of fresh water, forming a number of ancient "Lake Cahuillas." The last of these lakes dried up approximately 300 years ago. The shoreline of the lake can still be seen today in the La Quinta-Thermal area.

The region has a remarkable natural diversity. Within only a few score miles, terrain shifts from steep granite mountains to a huge inland sea; from lush oases to barren sand dunes. These mountains surrounding the Coachella Valley are essentially responsible for the desert conditions which prevail. For centuries the valley lay scorched by the summer sun and caressed by gentle warmth in winter. It remained for Lieutenant R. S. Williamson, of the U. S. Topographical Engineers to describe the area that would become Palm Springs. When his party, exploring the Pacific Railway route across the desert from Yuma to San Diego, arrived at the oasis, he wrote: "December 15, 1853. The greater part of the Valley is entirely dry and sandy and almost as forbidding as the Desert. The monotony is broken by a clump of palm trees on the north of the trail and a green bank from which springs issue known as 'Palm Springs!' The water, however, was not so strangely charged with these ingredients as to be unpleasant to drink, especially after having used the stagnant and muddy water of the Desert. I found its temperature, under the shade of a palm tree, to be 80; air 70. Three or four palm trees, each about thirty feet high, are standing on the bank from which the springs issue. They are much injured by fire and the persevering attacks of emigrants, who have cut down many of the finest of the group, as if determined that only the trees that grace the sandy avenue to the desert, and afford a cool shade for the springs, should be destroyed.'" Even at this early date, the preservation of the beauty of the desert was a matter of utmost importance.

The word "desert" normally conjures up a picture of unlimited boundaries to barren wasteland with perhaps an occasional mesquite bush or a cactus poking its prickly head through the rolling sand dunes. Not so in this case -- man and water have converted Palm Springs from such a scene to what is frequently referred to by prolific writers as "The Jewel Box of the Desert." To the founding fathers, who have guided the growth of this village, must go the credit for preserving the atmosphere and serenity of the desert, while creating a modern resort area. An excellent example, although a woman, is Pearl McManus McCallum. The inscription on the Palm Springs Airport fountain reads: "'Auntie Pearl'" was the first non-Indian child in Palm Springs arriving with her Father, "Judge" John Guthrie McCallum in 1884. She devoted most of the years of her long life until her demise in 1966 to her father's dream of achieving a beautiful and productive desert community." The lovely Palm Springs Airport fountain would have pleased Pearl McManus, for she pioneered in community beautification projects. She joined in cleaning up and planting the streets, the first such major effort in the town.

Twenty-five years ago, Pearl's name appeared on the initial list of directors for Desert Beautiful which Marian (Mrs. Cliff Henderson) began organizing in 1962. Pearl gladly permitted her name to be used in the list of directors. As a director, Pearl faithfully attended many of its meetings, to everyone's pleasure, and gave generous financial support. Failing health would not stop her involvement, for Pearl maintained contact with Desert Beautiful through telephone reports from Mrs. Henderson. Pearl listened to accounts of the Desert Beautiful activities and would often say, "I approve. I like what you are doing."

Heedless exploitation of the land was a danger of great concern to Pearl. In the movement for conservation of all plant life and protection of the land she was truly a pioneer. Ecology, the word so popular today, may not have been in her vocabulary, but she foresaw the urgent necessity of protecting the natural resources of the land, particularly of her cherished desert. One of Pearl's first major gifts to the Graduate School of Claremont was, according to Dr. Robert J. Bernard: "To bring here a professor of municipal and state government to develop young people to take hold of civic responsibilities and prevent the careless exploitation that so often destroys the beauty and long-term health of our communities." From the very first, she voiced her belief that if her father's dream of a fine community was ever to become a reality, such haphazard and uncontrolled building must be regulated. Her convictions were strengthened in 1938 when the great architectural genius who she admired so greatly for his innovative and imaginative approach to the entire field of architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright, visited Palm Springs. He took a hurried look and then castigated the entire community for permitting erratic, unplanned sub-divisions to mushroom into being with architectural monstrosities.

Preservation of the beauty of this desert increasingly became more and more important to Pearl. By personal influence and example she set the standards she hoped others would follow. Yet the sands of time flow ever forward from the early ages of the desert to the present. It remains for those now here to fulfill the dreams of the early pioneers of this land

Note: This essay was written by Lauro Jimenez for the 1987 Desert Beautiful Essay Contest

ANNUAL SOCIETY PICNIC
A memorial to Ed Mullins, Palm Desert pioneer

Sunday, March 29, 2009 - 11:30 sign-in / noon lunch / 1:00 raffle / 2:00 socializing
Lunch will consist of a burger (just like the ones served at Keedy's restaurant many years ago),
beans, chips, dessert and a beverage
$10 per person (pay at the picnic)
Wearing a red shirt will make you an official member of the "Red Shirt Society"
Please call the Society at 346-6588 and tell us how many will be in your party by March 24th.

NEWS SUMMARY --- by Past-President Dick Folkers

- Board members were asked to attend the book release party at the Visitor Center wearing their red Society T-shirts.
- Harry Quinn, a noted local historian and geologist, has agreed to serve on the Society's Board of Directors.
- Presentation on the life of Jimmy Doolittle by Jonna Hoppes, his granddaughter, on February 27 was very interesting. The question and answer segment added even more insights into the lives of the famous aviator and his family.
- Board members have been going to various stores to promote and sell the "Palm Desert Book." Copies are available at the Museum for $23.70 including tax.
- Board members voted to honor Dick and Ginny Folkers with the annual Founder's Day award this year. This award will be given in recognition of their dedication to the work of the Society over the years. The ceremony will be held in the Council Chambers of City hall from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served, and the public is welcome.

USE OF SPACE AT PORTOLA COMMUNITY CENTER

The City of Palm Desert has generously offered to let the Historical Society use some of the space at the Portola Community Center (the old library building) at a meeting on March 5. In addition to the use of the hall for large public meetings (like the 4th Friday lecture series), two other rooms will be provided for the storage of materials overflowing from the historic firehouse. This will greatly relieve problems caused by lack of sufficient space to carry on our work of preservation.

ART SHOW AND SALE

The grand opening, held on Friday - March 3, looked like one of the best art galleries in town. People arrived to see a large array of fine paintings as well as the regular exhibits of the Society's museum. Much of the credit for setting up this event goes to Hal Rover, who built a number of A-frame exhibit stands on which to display all of the smaller works of art. Thanks also goes to Mike Rover who helped his father with the carpentry work.

Setting up the refreshment table and keeping the event running smoothly was the task of a fine team of Board members. In addition to Hal Rover, other workers were: Marcy Gregory, Brett and Rose Romer, Kim Housken, and Don Graybill. All were quite proficient in sales of paintings, as well as explaining the local history of regular museum exhibits.

Three local desert artists furnished the wonderful paintings that made this event possible. All of them are at least 90 years of age, so that makes them doubly valuable to us as both creatively talented and historically aware. They are:

CARL BRAY **SALLY WARD** **BILL BENDER**

This art show and sale will continue to be open at the historic firehouse on El Paseo
for your enjoyment through Saturday, March 14th, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Tommy Tomson (Cliff Henderson's brother-in-law) designed the street layout for Palm Desert. We have found a map he drew on July 10, 1946. The central streets still have the same configuration, but the street names have been changed:

- Highway 111 was Palm Springs/Indio Hwy.
- San Luis Rey Ave. was Yucca Lane
- El Paseo was Paseo de las Palmas
- Gold Flower St. was Catsclaw

	East of Hwy. 74	West of Hwy. 74
- Shadow Mountain Drive was	Palo Verde Street	Saguaro Drive
- Verba Santa Drive was	Encelia Drive	Smoke Tree Drive
- Grapevine Street was	Mesquite Street	Bisnaga Drive
- Bursera Way	Sycamore Street	Devils Claw Drive

- Desert Magazine Bldg. was drawn between Hwy. 111 & El Paseo, & between Lupine & Larkspur.

Remember when: Hippie meant big in the hips,
And a trip involved travel in cars, planes and ships?
When fix was a verb that meant mend or repair,
And be-in meant merely existing somewhere?
When groovy meant furrowed with channels and hollows,
And birds were winged creatures, like robins and swallows?
When roll meant a bun, and rock was a stone,
And hang-up was something you did with the phone?
When pot was a vessel for cooking things in,
And hooked was what Grandma's rugs may have been?
When neat meant well-organized, tidy and clean,
And grass was a ground cover, normally green?
When fuzz was a substance, real fluffy, like lint,
And bread came from bakeries and not from the mint?
It's groovy, man groovy, but English it's not.
Methinks that our language is going to pot!

- donated by Edith Morrey
- from a Christmas letter written by Cliff Henderson in 1977

SCHEDULE OF UP-COMING EVENTS

Mar. 6-14	Art Show & Sale - Pioneer Painters (Sally Ward, Carl Bray, Bill Bender)	Society Firehouse	10 am-3 pm
Mar. 27, Fri.	Lecture: Salton Sea/Northshore Yacht Club/Dos Palmas By Jenny Kelly - cost $5.00	Portola Com. Center	7:00 pm
Mar. 29, Sun.	Annual Ed Mullins Memorial Picnic - large pavilion Burger lunch by the Keedy Kids - $10	Civic Center Park	11 social- 12 lunch
Apr. 24, Fri.	Lecture: Pre-history of Coachella Valley/ Martinez Slide By Harry Quinn - cost $5.00	Portola Com. Center	7:00 p.m.
May 16, Sat.	Founder's Day - Council Chambers Recipients: Dick & Ginny Folkers	City Hall	2-4 pm
July & Aug.	Museum closed for the summer		

Note: Written contributions) to this quarterly newsletter are welcomed by the editor. All such articles should be submitted to the Society office. Items for the Summer issue are due by May 15th. *- Ginny Folkers, Editor*

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